2/14/37

OUR ALASKA MISSIONS

***

Alaska was bought at the "bargain counter." After the passing of seventy years since Russia transferred that vast area of nearly six hundred thousand square miles to the United States for the comparatively paltry sum of seven million, two hundred thousand dollars, one-half a cent per acre, the rich treasures which it contains are only beginning to be discovered. The popular contempt and ridicule with which the American public greeted the purchase, calling it "Seward's Ice Box," "The Zero Islands," "The Polar Bear Treaty," and other names equally expressive of their disapproval, made it advisable from a political point of view to put the bargain away and to do nothing about it. For seventeen years following the purchase, the newly acquired territory was utterly neglected. No steps were taken to explore it and the popular prejudice prevailed that it was of no value and never would be worth what it cost. Not until 1884 did the Federal Government even bother to appoint a territorial governor or to establish a legal code; and not until 1900 was any provision made for local self-government. It was left to the succeeding generations to realize that in this vast territory is a veritable treasure house filled with a variety of natural resources, the value of which is beyond computation, and only a small part of which has yet been disclosed. The value of minerals, gold, copper, silver, and other ores, which Alaska has yielded since 1880 is $722,000,000. During the year 1836, the mineral products valued at $23,347,000 exceeded by twenty-seven per cent the value of ores shipped during the preceding year. Valuable platinum deposits have been discovered in the Goodnews Bay area, yielding over $300,000 in a single year. Deposits of antimony, chromium, molybdenum, nickel, tungsten, tin, graphite, gypsum, and sulphur, much of which are still lying dormant, await development and are of great potential value to the United States, and to the world. It is declared that there is sufficient coal in Alaska to

supply the needs of the United States for five hundred years. Vast areas of oil reserves are available but have not yet begun to be explored. The fishing industry alone produces at least seven times the amount which was paid for the entire territory. The output of the canneries in Alaska in 1936 was 8,700,000 cases of forty-eight cans each, upwards of fifty million dollars. More than $120,000,000 has been realized from the furs exported to the United States, besides a wealth of other products. Since 1897 the total value of the exports from Alaska to the United States exceeds two billion dollars.

Alaska, a Mission Field

While the stupendous natural resources of Alaska, as partially revealed by these figures, challenge the imagination, they represent only a fraction of the riches which the more intensive development of the coming years will produce.

The People of Alaska

While we are interested in the natural resources of Alaska, we have a greater interest in its people. According to the census of 1930, the population of Alaska is nearly 60,000, almost equally divided between natives and whites. The native population is found scattered in villages varying from thirty or forty to five or six hundred, scattered along 26,000 miles of coast and on the great rivers. Except in southeastern Alaska, these villages are widely separated and have little communication with each other. Among the Alaska natives, the village, and not the tribe, is the unit of social life.

The racial groups represented are: Eskimos, Aleuts, Athapascans, Thlingets, Haidas, and Tsimpsheans. The number in each group is as follows:

17,760	Eskimos
1,298	Aleuts
4,935	Athapascans
4,462	Thlingets
588	Haidas
845	Tsimpsheans
95	United States and Canadian Indians
Total... 29,983	

The accompanying map shows the distribution of this native population over the entire territory.

(M A P)

First Division:	4,462	Thlingets
	845	Tsimpsheans
	588	Haidas
	95	U. S. and Canadian tribes
	5,990	
Second Division:	8,686	Eskimos
Third Division:	1,000	Athapascan Indians
	5,000	Eskimos
	1,298	Aleuts
	7,298	
Fourth Division:	3,935	Athapascan Indians
	4,074	Eskimos
	8,009	

These divisions correspond to the judicial districts of Alaska. Two Senators and four Representatives are elected to the Alaska legislature from each district. The Territory is represented in Congress by one Delegate who has no vote.

The majority of the white population of Alaska is found in Divisions one, three, and four, but there are white people in practically every part of the Territory.

Presbyterian Missions in Alaska

Missionary work was begun in Alaska primarily in behalf of the native population. The oldest native mission was established among the Tsimpsheans at Metlakatla when it was a part of British Columbia, by William ("Father") Duncan, an English lay preacher. Controversies with the established church and also with the Canadian Government led Father Duncan to move his model colony to Annette Island, in Alaskan territory, in 1887, and in 1891 the United States Government set aside this Island as a reserva-

tion for the perpetual use of the Tsimpshean people.

In 1876 a band of native Christians from Metlakatla secured a government contract to cut wood at Fort Wrangell. When the Sabbath came they ceased work, meeting according to their custom, for services of worship. When the work was completed, one of their number, Philip McKay, known among the natives as "Clah", did not return with the others but remained to preach and teach. During the winter which followed, forty natives confessed their faith in Christ and many more gave up their heathen practices.

In the meantime, Dr. A. L. Lindsley, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Portland had become interested in the natives through the reports which had come to him describing their degradation and helplessness. This mother of churches, under Dr. Lindsley's leadership, decided to send Mrs. A. R. McFarland, then residing in Portland, but previously engaged in missionary work among Indians in New Mexico and Idaho, to Fort Wrangell. She was accompanied by Dr. Sheldon Jackson, who through a providential interposition was prevented from carrying out his plans for work in other fields. They arrived in Fort Wrangell August 10th, 1877, and within a few days a school was established with "Clah" as assistant teacher and Mrs. Sarah Dickinson, a native who had married a white man, as the interpreter. Twenty Indian young women, two or three boys and a mother with her three children constituted the membership of this school. (The full story of Mrs. McFarland's work is told in a pamphlet entitled "Amanda R. McFarland, Pioneer," published by the Board of National Missions, price 5¢)

During the ensuing years, other missionaries were commissioned such as Dr. S. Hall Young, Dr. Sheldon Jackson, John G. Brady (later the Governor of the Territory), all of whom gave themselves with great devotion and with marked success to the task of evangelizing the native people.

The church at Fort Wrangell, the first Protestant church established in Alaska, was organized in 1878. Other missions were established, some of which have grown into churches, while others are continued as preaching stations and outposts. Among the Thlingets, Haidas and Tsimpsheans, representing the native tribes of south-

eastern Alaska, there are seventeen Presbyterian churches. In Juneau, the Territorial Capital, the Northern Light Presbyterian Church is a strong self-supporting congregation composed wholly of white people. These churches are served by twelve white ministers and four native missionaries. They comprise the Alaska Presbytery. Following are the names of the towns and villages in which Presbyterian churches have been established:

Saxman	Kake
Ketchikan	Sitka
Metlakatla	Killisnoo
Hydaburg	Hoonah
Craig	Juneau (one white and one native)
Klawock	Haines
Kasaan	Skagway
Wrangell	Kluckwan
Petersburg	

Sunday Schools and preaching stations are maintained in smaller native villages adjacent to these churches. Vacation Bible Schools are conducted in every church and in many of the outpost missions every summer. The total membership of these churches (1936) is 1,525. They receive an average of one hundred new members by confession of faith each year, and they contributed during the year 1935-36 the sum of $13,700 to local support and benevolences.

In southeastern Alaska, a missionary boat, sixty feet long and equipped with a Diesel engine, is maintained. It is called "Princeton" and its skipper, Rev. Verne Swanson, is an ordained minister besides being recognized as a most efficient navigator and engineer. With the assistance of a native helper, Mr. Swanson operates the "Princeton" throughout the entire year, through perilous waters and stormy weather, serving the transportation requirements of all our missionaries and mission stations in southeastern Alaska. Since no other means of transportation are available except airplane it is necessary to maintain this boat to carry the ministers and elders to and from the meetings of Presbytery, to transport students to and from their homes to Sheldon Jackson School at Sitka, and to take children to and from Haines School and Orphanage. The "Princeton" is frequently used as an ambulance to take sick persons to hospitals for treatment, and many times it has been used to transport a sorrowing family with

the body of their loved one, to the family burying place. Such service is rendered freely to those who do not have the financial resources to enable them to travel on the regular steamship lines.

At Hoonah, the largest native town, our missionary, Mr. Bromley, uses the gasoline boat, "Lindsley," which has been in commission in Alaskan waters for many years, in his ministry to the villages where canneries are located, near Hoonah, and whose spiritual needs would otherwise be neglected. Similar service is being rendered to villages around Craig and Klawock by the missionary stationed in that area who also is equipped with a power boat.

During the past few years particular emphasis has been given to the development of a thorough-going program for the young people in our native churches. Each church has a thriving young people's society and during the summer a Young People's Conference is conducted for a week in Sitka, using the facilities of the Sheldon Jackson School. Here the young people are being trained in methods of church and Sunday School work besides being equipped for leadership in young people's societies, Vacation Bible Schools, and for Sunday School teaching.

Haines House (located at Haines) provides a Christian home for children of the Alaska Indian tribes who are bereft of parental care and who otherwise would be without shelter, food or clothing. These children receive their education in the government day school in Haines. Haines House accommodates _____ children under the care of _____ workers.

Included in the service of our missionary pastor at the Haines Church is the responsibility of ministering as chaplain for upwards of four hundred soldiers at Chilkoot Barracks, the United States Army post near Haines.

Educating the Natives

It was a Presbyterian missionary, Dr. Sheldon Jackson, who was appointed by the Federal Government to establish a system of public schools for the Alaska natives. Under an Act of Congress in 1905, the responsibility for maintaining public

schools for natives in Alaska was placed upon the Federal government. The Territorial government provides, out of taxes levied on various industries, for the education of white children and "the children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life." At present the Federal government operates one hundred community day schools and two vocational boarding schools, one at Fort Wrangell and the other at Eklutna, near Anchorage. In an article in "Indians at Work" (January 15th, 1936) Mr. Charles W. Hawkesworth, Assistant Director of the Office of Indian Affairs in Juneau, makes this statement:

> "During the sixty-nine years we have been in Alaska we have turned out only two full-blood natives with educations which whites consider academically complete. A small percentage. Had we, in the early years of our school program, encouraged a few boys and girls to complete a high school course and then go on to a college or professional institution, what a difference there would be in the Bureau's personnel today! With the alertness of mind and action displayed in the Japanese, we have every reason to believe native Alaskans would have participated in the progress of the Territory to a much greater extent.
>
> "The outstanding educated representative of Metlakatla was Edward Marsden. Marsden had a college and professional school training in the States. He returned to Alaska and started his work at Saxman as a Presbyterian missionary. There he built his own home and a forty-foot power boat. He did all the work himself. He then moved to Metlakatla, where his people lived. There he built another home, drew plans for a church building and directed the construction. He was for several years secretary and leading spokesman for the Metlakatla Council. He was a wizard of words in both written and spoken forms and as an after dinner speaker, either before a white or native audience, he was unparalleled. Marsden was a full-blood native. We have only one other who has received a complete education such as is now required for positions of leadership. The second is David Morgan, a recent college graduate on the teaching staff of the Hoonah School."

The government boarding school (Wrangell Institute) at Fort Wrangell and the Sheldon Jackson School at Sitka are the only schools offering secondary education for natives of southeastern Alaska. The former is conducted by the Federal Government. Sheldon Jackson School is maintained by the Board of National Missions. Its efficiency both of curriculum, equipment and faculty standards, is recognized throughout the Territory. It offers junior-senior high school courses, grades seven to twelve. The usual academic subjects are offered with, in addition, a strong vocational program. This consists of home making for the girls - cooking, sewing, child care, home nursing,

budgeting - and industrial training for the boys - boat building, printing, carpentry, machine and electric work. Each course is tied up as closely as possible with community conditions and needs.

"Competent Christian Citizenship" is the goal of Sheldon Jackson School and one of the planks in the five-fold platform of the Alaska Native Brotherhood which also includes: "Every Indian educated; every Indian in business; every Indian voting and able to give reasons for his vote; that I shall leave Alaska not weaker than I found it, but better and stronger." From the beginning of the Brotherhood and the companion society, the Alaska Native Sisterhood, officers and leaders have been graduates and former students of the school.

The first high school class was graduated from Sheldon Jackson School in 1921. By 1936 eighty boys and girls had been graduated from high school and many had gone on to other schools for further training. In 1935 ten graduates were attending normal schools, colleges and the nurses' training school at Ganado Mission, Arizona, while three were special students at Sheldon Jackson. Such well-trained young leaders as these are rapidly making places for themselves in the professions in Alaska. For example, one is an ordained pastor now in charge of the Presbyterian Mission Church at Wainwright, two are teaching in government schools, and one is a nurse in a government hospital. Lay leadership for the native churches in Alaska comes largely from Sheldon Jackson graduates and former students. They serve as church officers, as officers of the women's missionary societies, and as workers in the Sunday School and young people's organizations.

In western and northern Alaska, our churches and missions are ministering to Whites, Indians, and Eskimos from Cordova to Point Barrow, the northernmost settlement on the American Continent, where we maintain a church with more than three hundred and fifty Eskimo members, now served by Rev. Fred G. Klerekoper who recently succeeded Dr. Henry W. Greist. From Point Barrow along the ice-bound northern coast of Alaska, to Demarcation Point, a distance of over five hundred miles, Mr. Andrew Akootchook, a lay Eskimo missionary, itinerates with his dog team, preaching to his people in their

igloos and villages. On St. Lawrence Island, in the Bering Sea, our Board maintains the only Protestant mission work through the ministry of Miss Ann Bannan. At Cape Prince of Wales, Miss Emma Stauffer is both missionary and nurse for the Eskimos of that area. These isolated stations receive mail only during the summer and can send letters out at other seasons only when a plane happens to arrive on a special errand of business or in the government service. In Fairbanks, "the golden heart of Alaska," where the University of Alaska is situated, our Presbyterian congregation is comfortably housed in one of the best equipped church buildings in the entire Territory. Services are conducted and Sunday Schools are maintained in four out-stations. Anchorage Church maintains services and religious instruction classes at the Eklutna government boarding school and is looking toward extending its work into other villages. Cordova Church is ministering in an efficient manner to the immediate community and is maintaining services regularly at Kennecott, McCarthy and Chitina, besides conducting a Sunday School and week-day Bible instruction for pupils at the native school.

Presbyterian work at Barrow began with the commissioning of Leander M. Stevenson in 1890. He established a day school and organized a Presbyterian church, but it was not until seven years later that medical service was undertaken. Then Dr. H. R. Marsh, a graduate in the spring of that year from a medical college in New York City, was commissioned. In the past thirty-nine years four physicians accepted appointment as medical missionaries to this difficult post, serving at the same time as pastor of the Eskimo churches in the Barrow area. On account of impaired health and advancing years, Dr. Henry W. Greist, after sixteen years of service, sought relief from his rigorous labors and retired in 1936.

In the same manner in which the Board of Home Missions pioneered at Barrow in establishing a school which in due time was turned over to the Federal government, the responsibility for health service at Barrow, which also was inaugurated and maintained by Presbyterian missionary funds, was transferred to the government in 1936. The plans of the government provide not only for the operation of the hospital with a resident physician and nursing staff but also for the employment of a field nurse who

will travel by dog team with an Eskimo guide to the Coast villages east of Point Barrow. The hospital building will be rebuilt and enlarged, and modern surgical equipment will be installed.

Matanuska Valley Resettlement Project

In the spring of 1935 the Federal government announced its plan to establish a colony in the Matanuska Valley composed of families selected from the relief rolls in northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Two hundred families were selected and transported by boat to Seward, and thence by the government railroad, a distance of one hundred and sixty miles to Palmer, then a small frontier town. Each of these families was to be assigned to a forty-acre plot in a protected valley in the Chugach mountains, the government assisting them to establish their homes by building houses and barns and providing necessary farm equipment, horses, and other live stock. The task of clearing the land which was covered with a native growth of spruce and hemlock presented a discouraging prospect, but with the help of experienced workers from the lumber camps of the northwest, aided by government machinery, sufficient ground was cleared within eighteen months to establish every family on its own plot, with a comfortable log house, a barn and facilities for operating a farm. They are allowed five years in which to clear their respective forty-acre allotments.

Since, under the allocation of Alaska territory among the major evangelical denominations, this area was assigned to the Presbyterian Church, and since we had a strong church at Anchorage, the nearest town, our Board of National Missions assigned Rev. Bert Bingle, who was the pastor of our church in Cordova, to be the minister of this new colony, instructing him to establish a church for them in due time. Another minister was placed in charge of the Cordova Church. While upwards of thirty families have returned to the States, the remainder have carried on by hard labor and through many hardships, and are becoming well established in their new homes. A church was organized and a very attractive log building was erected, the first service in the new

building being held on Christmas, 1936. The congregation provided the logs, cutting down the trees and sawing them into proper lengths, besides performing most of the labor in setting up the walls. The permanence of the colony depends upon the ability of the people to attain economic independence, and upon the continuance of a policy of generous subsidies and patience on the part of the government until that goal is reached. If the colony remains after the period when the people are required to begin payments on the amount which the government has advanced to them, our Church will continue to serve them and within a reasonable time they will realize their desire to become a self-sustaining congregation ministering in an effective way to the needs of the entire community.

The membership of our churches in western and northern Alaska is as follows:

Barrow _____
Wainwright _____
Fairbanks _____
Cordova _____
Anchorage _____
Nenana _____
Palmer (Matanuska Valley) - 100

These churches contributed in 1935-36 the sum of $_____ for local support and $_____ for benevolences. The total Sunday School enrollment is _____.

Reindeer

Dr. Sheldon Jackson introduced the reindeer into Alaska in 1891. It was an effort to improve the economic condition of the Eskimos by providing them with an unfailing supply of fresh meat, especially during the season of the year when fish and blubber are scarce. Moreover the reindeer hides could be used for clothing, bedding and as a covering for their igloos. Through contributions received from interested individuals, Dr. Jackson purchased sixteen deer in 1891 and transported them from Siberia. The next year he brought in 171 more. In 1893 the United States Congress voted an appropriation of $6,000 to purchase additional deer. During the next nine seasons Dr. Jackson brought 1,280 reindeer into the Territory. The herds have multiplied rapidly, now numbering more than one million. Unfortunately a large corporation of

white men, undertaking to develop a profitable industry obtained possession of some of the herds and the plans of Dr. Jackson and of the government to keep the reindeer, under government supervision, for the sole benefit of the Eskimos, have been seriously threatened. However, after long continued and determined efforts on the part of the Eskimos to obtain relief, there is a fair prospect that the proposals of the Alaska Delegate in Congress to regain control by the government of all the herds and to provide full protection of the interests of the Eskimos in these herds will be enacted into a law.

The Future of Alaska Missions

The present necessity of course is to continue all the work now being done and to make it more effective by the enlargement of the scope of our local church programs by increasing our missionary personnel and by the improvement of our equipment. In all parts of the Territory there are neglected areas where the gospel message has not yet been preached. Only a small proportion of the Eskimo population is reached by Christian teaching and preaching. The gospel offers the only remedy for their wretchedness, their fear, their immorality, their superstitions, and from the bondage of shamans (witch doctors). In the Bristol Bay country no mission stations of any Protestant denomination have yet been established and no missionaries have made any permanent settlement in that area. Itinerant missionaries are needed to proclaim the gospel and to carry on a work of personal evangelism among scattered families in the thinly settled parts of the Territory, and in many villages where a Christian minister has never been seen, groups of Christians could be cultivated and regular services established. Additional funds are needed to accomplish these goals. Consecrated men and women can be found who are willing to give up their lives in service in behalf of these natives who are now citizens of our United States. But "how can they go except they be sent?"

By Their Fruits

In no other field of missionary effort do we find more impressive evidences of providential guidance and blessing than in our Alaska work. Tillie Paul Tamaree,

the daughter of a Chilkoot Indian chief, and the first fruits of Mrs. McFarland's work, trained for Christian life and service. For more than half a century she has witnessed faithfully and effectively to the transforming power of Christ. She is the first woman to be ordained to the eldership in our Alaska churches and she was elected the lay-commissioner from Alaska Presbytery to the General Assembly of 1936.

Another of the fruits of Alaska missions is Edward Marsden who gave himself in complete devotion to the service of his people, and in such an understanding and helpful way that his memory is enshrined in the hearts of the Tsimpsheans as Christ's man.

Four young graduates of Sheldon Jackson School were the organizers of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, a society which came into being from a Christian motive and with a Christian purpose. Its influence has always been exercised in advancing the principles of social betterment and service which the Church is constantly teaching and preaching.

Percy Ipalook, the Eskimo boy from Barrow, now the minister of our Eskimo church in Wainwright; Cornelia Phillips, a Barrow convert, now a Christian nurse in an Alaska hospital; and a host of others who have seen "that Light that lighteneth every man who cometh into the world," baptized by the Holy Spirit, and with a vision of the possibilities of service to their own people, are the continuing fruits of the heroic and sacrificial labors of great missionary pioneers of our own beloved Presbyterian Church. Let us be worthy of this, our blessed heritage.